People used their knowledge of food properties to ameliorate their physical condition. During lactation, for instance, women ate vegetables or not "depending on the condition of the baby," for breast milk was very easily affected by adverse properties. In the broader context of general dietary needs, people entertained ideas about the suitability of certain foods to certain ages, sexes, occupations, conditions, and occasions (Hauck, et al: 42-50). Nevertheless, persons often risked an undesirable effect in food for pleasure. The proper banana variety for ritual use was the tiny kluai nam, yet it was not planted much in Bang Chan because the people "did not like the taste." They substituted the "pleasant-tasting" kluai nam wā. Mere orthodoxy came off second. The heat of alcoholic drink relished by men and older women often pressed the margin of safe temperature control. The cobra--turtle--or chicken--plus--alcohol feasts exemplified how readily the elders gambled even on the increment of sin from eating meat, or risked an over-heated temper, for the joy of eating such cherished delicacies.

Food dislikes, if temporary, reflected an imbalance of elements; if usual, an individual constitutional set of the person's elements. To eat disliked food was therefore positively harmful. To urge someone to eat disliked food was wrong.[16]

## Illness

All illness, anxiety, and soul loss was caused by intrusions from outside the body. The intrusion might be from a supernatural source (wiset:powerful) or natural (tām thammachāt) (Textor:10) but in either case the result was the same: disruption of the elements. Anxiety, whether caused by a social situation such as fear of frustration, by a broken bone or by a fever, also was a disruption of balance. An attack by the supernatural disease missile, "khuh"[17] gave rise to the classic symptoms of wind-excess: "a man cried all the time and had flatulency." Elements were also disorganized by spirit attack. The victim suffered hysteria, paroxysm, flatulence, convulsion,

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16. Phillips (p. 61) reported that parents did not give their child a disliked medicine because "it offends him.... It is better not to give it to him than hurt his feelings."

17. This small skin missile invaded the body and then expanded to the size of a buffalo. Intentional attack (sorcery) might kill; accidental, merely pained (cf. Textor:116-127). Suspected khun was one of the few reasons why a family would authorize so grave a violation of the body of a deceased member as an autopsy.

before completing these obligations, the parents lost out on their anticipated reward (cf. L.M. Hanks, 1962).

Since waywardness (nai thiaw) was considered a continuous threat, magical means were taken at the moment of birth to ensure that a child stay close to the family that raised him. The blessing following the winnowing ceremony invoked immovable things: the post, the cat that traditionally never roamed far, the pumpkin that sat and fattened:

> "...Stay at home like the bottom of the house post. Watch the house like a cat. Eat and stay here! Never leave home. Be fat and heavy as the ash pumpkin..."

The most important binding actions utilized, or brought the child into physical contact with, objects long associated with family, in particular the house and land. The umbilical cord was cut on earth or phlai dug from the house-land itself with a bamboo "knife" sliced from one of the deeply sunk house posts. Of these "the knife is the important thing." The phlai also had medicinal purposes. With a feather "from the mother's house" the baby's navel was smeared with cobwebs from a spider whose web indicated long undisturbed residence. They buried the placenta either under some large old tree that stood near the house, or under the house stair. The old family winnowing tray, old clothes, and well-used family possessions were used first before any new furnishings were purchased for the baby. A fire of sakae wood grown on premises boiled the water for the baby and mother, and heated the mother. Sakae "was planted when a house was first built so that every generation of occupants would have it available for use at confinement" and also for firewood at other times (cf. McF. 834). All these binding rites assured that the child being rooted to a home terrain, would not wander frightened, and so "would not cry." He also would be at home to participate in the merit-making that would reconstitute the family in another existence.

If a child were born away from home, how was this bond to his locality established? On one to two occasions when the child was born at the Minburi Health Center, Hauck (notes, 1954) observed a solution to this dilemma. The mothers returned home, as was customary, within a few hours of delivery and were established by their respective fires. Their babies were winnowed and laid on their trays with the usual auspicious book, pencil, and needle. Neither tray held any bamboo, clod, nor phlai, however, for these had not been used. On one tray, though, was laid a steel knife from the kitchen, mute proof that a family cutting instrument ought to be there. On another occasion, a father asked to be given his child's placenta so as to bury it on the house site. In so far as possible, people in Bang Chan tried to carry on the old rites.

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948 848 372 The Cone of Wood

When a child was conceived out of wedlock, the first problem raised was, "Who will build the wood pile?" The actual father had to come forward and identify himself, for he and no one else could perform this duty. A child could not be born without the father giving this assistance.

593 84 789 372 This cone of wood represented a "womb" towards which a father actively played out his role. His child was in it. While building it, his behavior affected the child, just as his wife's behavior acted on the child in her womb. If the pile were incomplete before the onset of labor or gave out before the fire-rest was terminated, the child would "never finish any task in its life." The very manifestation of industriousness involved in collecting the wood, though, made the unborn child industrious. Gathering a quantity of wood for this big pile was not easy. Old houses had plenty of wood, for they stood in thick groves, but new houses sometimes stood bare and stark in the fields. He placed spiny Indian jujube or Chinese date (phutsǎ) and Manila tamarind (ma khaa thet) all over the outside to protect this "womb" from invasion by malevolent spirits. Thus he also protected his wife's womb. Lakaa wood was preferred because it was smokeless. Collecting a mixture of woods was easier, but then the fire smoked. Mixed or all lakaa, whichever the constitution of the pile for a woman's first confinement set the pattern for all her later ones.

[824]

At the onset of labor, the father had to open the way for his child to come out of the womb, so the pile was tipped over in a direction paralleling the position of the Great Snake. This astrological orientation was exactly that of the woman in labor. Unless the mother's head and the apex of the fallen wood pile coincided with the direction of the head of the Snake, with the open end of womb and cone below, "with and not against the lie of the snake's scales," the child would have to struggle against these scales as he came out. By tipping the cone of wood properly the father helped his child to an easy exit.

The thorns protected the womb and the baby inside from all evil spirits during the months of pregnancy. With the onset of labor, the holy cord which surrounded the mother took over this function, and kept away such dangerous spirits as phii krasu and, if the baby died at birth, the violent New Baby Ghost (cf. Textor:261).

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might provide clues to ways in which the diet may be improved. Most of these items were included in lists given by Sharp et al. (1953)[1]. To those lists should be added the following items from our food records:

Green leafy and yellow vegetables: Leaves of bergamot, chili, morinda, onion, potato, pumpkin, (2)sa-(5)noo, and of the following trees: (2)ma-(1)dan, (4)khlyb[2] and West Indian pea tree; (2)kha-(1)eauaun flowers.

Other vegetables: flowers of leek and pumpkin, and Chinese or black truffle (water chestnut).

Fruits: Thai nutmeg and tomato.

Fresh foods other than fish: buffalo, duck, cobra, turtle and field rat.

At the end of Chart 2, sources of water for drinking and food preparation have been included, not only because water is properly considered a nutrient, but also because the water used in preparation of food may affect the wholesomeness of foods eaten raw or with little cooking.

Untreated water was the customary beverage with meals. Ordinarily no distinction was made in source of drinking water for children and adults although boiled water was given to mothers and infants to drink during the post partum rest period (Hauck, 1956). Occasionally a sick person would be given boiled water to drink; for example one man who said he was "a little sick" and "not working" was observed to drink hot boiled water from a thermos bottle. In 1955, Ralis[3] found that tea was seldom or never drunk by nearly 3/4 of the respondents. Less than 7% drank it frequently. Thus in Bang Chan no custom had grown up which would afford the general population with a measure of protection against infection from

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1. See Sharp et al., 1953, pp. 193-196 for a list of 32 fish known to be found in Bang Chan; pp. 293-294 for 34 fruits grown in Bang Chan, and p. 295 for 11 fruits known to be used but not grown there; pp. 296-298 for 41 vegetables grown in Bang Chan, and pp. 299-300 for 24 other vegetables used.

2. (4)Khlyb was the term used in Bang Chan for an unidentified tree of the family Leguminosae. Its sweet tasting leaves were washed in boiling water to get rid of a bad odor, then were eaten with (4)nam (4)phrig, a chili sauce.

3. Golden and Ralis, 1957, p. 57. The answers to: "Do you drink tea frequently, occasionally, seldom or never?" were: often, 22; occasionally, 68; seldom, 158; never, 85.

262 753 855 constipation in infants, others that it caused diarrhea, whether eaten directly by the infant or by the mother.

The belief that eggs would cause dental caries, and should therefore be omitted from children's diets, was expressed by the mother in a poorly nourished family. The possibility that such ideas arose from unwillingness to spend much money on food for a child has already been noted (see p. 42).

262 753 758 Information on food suitable in illness was obtained only incidentally. The Thai did not appear to have a consistent theory as to the cause of disease (Sharp et al. 1956, p. 489), and residents of Bang Chan did not seem to associate any of their illnesses with contaminated food or water. Choice of food in illness was probably associated in some instances with the idea that the body is composed of the four elements: wind, water, fire and earth, and that sickness results from or is a symptom of imbalance in the proportions or arrangement of these elements. Thus the "fragrant banana" and eggs, because of their "cooling effect," were said to be forbidden in measles. A child who was getting measles was restricted to rice and dried fish. In contrast the small, rather flavorless banana, designated (3)kluaj (4)nam-(4)waa, was said to have "no cooling effect" and was considered an acceptable food in illness, as well as for newborn infants.

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262 753 784 In one instance, when a patient had been taken to the hospital with severe diarrhea, a nurse instructed other family members not to eat ices, syrup (see p. 36), or raw vegetables, nor to drink unboiled water. The informant who told us about this offered no reason for these precautions. These foods were simply "forbidden" to the family of a patient with severe diarrhea.

777 820 205 Notions as to what is fortunate or unfortunate may also affect agricultural processes. The many ceremonies associated with culture and use of rice have been mentioned (p. 42). The idea that a papaya tree growing near the house was "unlucky" was attributed to Thai by a young Thai Moslem in Bang Chan. When we commented on the papaya tree near his front door, he said the papaya tree dies easily and does not like water, but his was planted on high ground. According to this informant few villagers would be willing to grow papaya trees near the house. He considered the non-specific threat of harm as unreasonable, though he said that if specific harm were said to result, he would be concerned about it. The midwife at Minburi Health Center said that she urged each woman who came there for delivery to have more banana, mango and papaya trees planted for home use. Before raising of papayas can be successfully encouraged, however, the idea that papaya trees bring back luck must be overcome.

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